

**LOUDOUN COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD**  
**STATEMENT OF JUSTIFICATION**  
**Dulles South Middle School (MS-7) and**  
**Public Utility Service Center without Storage Yard**  
**Hovatter Property**  
**Commission Permit (CMPT 2015-00\_\_)**  
**November 19, 2015**

**Background**

A Commission Permit (CMPT 2012-0003) was approved on October 16, 2012, for a future Dulles South middle school (MS-7) or alternatively an elementary school on approximately 35 acres of land located south of Braddock Road, west of The Greens at Willowsford. The property was more particularly described as MCPI 288-37-9271 (16.64 ac.) and 288-37-4064 (18.31 ac.), situated in the Blue Ridge Election District. Subsequent to approval of the Commission Permit, Loudoun County Public Schools was contacted by Stanley Martin to discuss a potential land exchange. Stanley Martin has a number of properties under contract including a property adjacent to the MS-7 school site identified as MCPI 288-36-7479 (36.65 ac.). The proposed trade would add approximately 4.3 acres of land from the adjacent property to the south of the school parcel in exchange for approximately 8.9 acres (including 4.6 acres of floodplain) on the school site that is physically separated from the main school acreage by floodplain. The exchange would provide greater flexibility and more efficient utilization for the school site layout and consolidate the separated acreage into the residential assemblage. The exchange was included as a part of a rezoning application (ZMAP 2013-0014) which was denied in February, 2015. Since that time, Stanley Martin has decided to move forward with a by-right subdivision (SBPL-2015-0013) and has worked with LCPS to continue with the land exchange.

The previously approved Commission Permit did not include the exchange acreage, therefore, this new Commission Permit is being requested. There are several benefits to the school site from the planned exchange including the ability to provide a local road connection to the Willowsford Community, as was recommended by the Planning Commission during the initial CMPT review process. This connection will allow residents from The Greens to access the school without having to go out to Braddock Road. Other benefits include a site redesign that incorporates the revised middle school building footprint, consolidation of physical education fields with the basketball courts on the southern portion of the site away from Braddock Road, the ability to provide full sized playing fields, the addition of parking at the fields for use by teams scheduled through Parks Recreation and Community Services programs, relocation of the bus loop to be further from The Greens and overall improved on-site circulation. LCPS is filing two potential layouts for this Commission Permit, one with the land exchange and one without. While LCPS believes the exchange will be implemented, the timeline for construction of the school does not afford another CMPT application submission and review if for some unforeseen reason the land exchange should not move forward.

The proposed public utility service center is requested in order to utilize the existing barn, or a replacement building if the barn cannot be maintained in its current location or moved, for the storage of LCPS maintenance equipment (mowers, weed eaters, snow plows, salt spreaders, and similar equipment). The existing barn is temporarily being utilized for this purpose pursuant to SPAM 2014-0043).

In addition to this Commission Permit application, LCPS has filed a boundary line adjustment for the planned exchange.

### **Proposal**

The Loudoun County School Board (LCSB) seeks approval of a Commission Permit (CMPT 2015-00\_\_) to allow a future Dulles South middle school (MS-7) on approximately 30-35 acres of land located south of Braddock Road, west of The Greens at Willowsford. (Note: The elementary school alternative is no longer proposed. Two layouts are provided with the CMPT, one for the land exchange school parcel and one for the original 35 acre site). It is also proposed to retain the existing barn or construct a new structure for storage of equipment. During the winter, the equipment would consist of grounds maintenance equipment (mowers and the like) and in the summer the equipment would be that utilized for snow removal (snow plows and salt spreaders). The equipment would be placed on trailers and stored in the barn and then exchanged as the seasons change. The purpose of placing the equipment in the barn is to protect it from the weather.

The Property is more particularly described as a portion of MCPI 288-37-9271 (16.64 ac.), 288-37-4064 (18.31 ac.) and 288-36-7479 (36.60 ac.) situated in the Blue Ridge Election District. Approximately 4.3 acres of land will be added to the southern end of the school site from MCPI 288-36-7479 in exchange for approximately 8.9 acres from the school parcels, including 4.6 acres of minor floodplain. The final parcel acreage is contingent on the review and approval of the subdivision application and the ultimate disposition of the exchange. In the unlikely event the exchange should not move forward, the school would be constructed on the original parcels, generally as depicted in the alternative layout provided in the CMPT Plan.

The Adopted LCSB Capital Improvement Program (2016-2020) plans the opening of MS-7 in 2019. The site is southwest of the community of Stone Ridge and John Champe High School (HS-7) and a future elementary school site (ES-28). The LCSB owned property is split zoned TR-1UBF (Transition Residential-1, Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley, 10.04 acres) and TR-3UBF (Transition Residential- 3, Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley, 24.91 acres) and contains approximately 5.12 acres of minor floodplain, Floodplain Overlay District (FOD). After the exchange, the property will have approximately 5.5 acres of TR-1 and 24.8 acres of TR-3 including .05 acres of minor floodplain.

The Loudoun County Public Schools program for a middle school includes a building of approximately 185,000 square feet with a student capacity of 1,350 and three physical education playing fields (two soccer and one softball), plus basketball courts. The existing barn is approximately 3,000 square feet.

### **COMMISSION PERMIT FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION:**

**The checklist for a Commission Permit requires a Statement of Justification that details the proposed use. Central to the review of a Commission Permit is the need to establish that the use is consistent with the applicable comprehensive plan policies.**

The proposed public school site is governed under the policies of the Revised General Plan (The Plan), the Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP), and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Mobility Master Plan (BPMMP). The subject property is designated as Transition Policy Area under The Plan and is located in the Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley Subarea. The Transition Policy Area is intended to provide a visual and spatial transition between the suburban development in the eastern part of the County and rural development in the west. All development within the Transition Policy area is to achieve a balance between the built and natural environments and to provide significant open space respecting the Green Infrastructure policies. The narrative for the non-residential component of the Transition Area recognizes the need to provide public schools that will serve both the rural and suburban populations. The Transition policies envision that the Transition Area will develop in varying densities and development patterns including large-lot low density residential development, higher density mixed-use villages and residential clusters. The Upper Broad Run/Upper Foley Subarea policies state that development in a clustered pattern at existing zoning of one dwelling unit per three acres or one unit per acre would be appropriate and reasonable. Ideally, new non-residential uses are to be organized within the community cores of villages and, in general, should be compatible with the overall land use pattern. Plan policies provide that non-residential uses within the Transition Policy Area are to front on major arterial or collector roads and are to be developed at a scale that allows them to blend effectively into the rural landscape. The scale and volume of primary structures and accessory elements should not dominate over the natural landscape and should be screened through the use of natural landscaping and earthen berms. Building heights are to relate to the surrounding landscape. Specific school policies provide that public school sites should be located at the focus of the attendance area and provide safe and convenient access for students.

The proposed public school site is situated south of Braddock Road, a planned minor collector in the vicinity of the property. John Champe High School (HS-7) and a future elementary school site (ES-28) is located approximately two miles to the northeast on Northstar Boulevard (Route 659 Relocated/Gum Springs Road). Surrounding developments, include The Grove at Willowsford and Westport to the north and The Greens at Willowsford to the east and south. A by-right subdivision has been filed for properties to the west and to the north, across Braddock Road. This site will be central to these developing and future residential communities and will provide significant open space as well as needed educational facilities. The proposed maintenance equipment storage will support public schools in the Dulles South area.

Buffers will be provided on site consistent with the Plan policies for green infrastructure elements and the County's landscape ordinance. To the extent possible, existing mature vegetation will be incorporated into the site buffers, to be determined at site plan stage. The future middle school will utilize a two story design, not to exceed 40 feet in height. Through the use of buffers, existing vegetation, and open space, the school will "transition" into the planned lower density of the surrounding properties. Further, school building design will incorporate features to provide an aesthetic appearance including double hung windows similar to residential construction, accent materials to provide interest in color and texture, and horizontal bands to minimize height appearance. The site is well positioned to serve the Transition and Rural population of the surrounding area. Safe and convenient vehicular access will be provided via Braddock Road and for the adjacent residential neighborhood through a local connecting street.

Overall, school sites provide a balance between the built and natural environment and afford significant open space. The Plan provides guidelines for development in accord with Conservation Design. Chapter 5 of The Plan identifies four components of the Green Infrastructure to be considered as a part of Conservation Design:

Group One/Natural Resource Assets. The proposed site contains various natural features including wooded areas, minor floodplain and wetlands. A Tree Survey will be submitted with the Site Plan application. The majority of the site is in open fields, however, the development of the property will necessitate removal of wooded areas. To the extent practical, existing trees will be utilized to meet landscape buffer requirements along the site boundaries and adjacent to green infrastructure elements.

The Property contains approximately 5.2 acres of Minor Floodplain, the majority of which will be exchanged for land south of the school site which is unencumbered by environmental constraints. Wetlands Studies and Solutions, Inc (WSSI) prepared a wetlands delineation for the property dated July 11, 2012, which indicates that there are jurisdictional wetlands and other waters of the U.S. present on the property. The area of the wetlands is 27,663 square feet. The Jurisdictional Determination (JD) (#2012-1445) confirming the wetland delineation was issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on August 22, 2012. Approximately, 10,600 square feet of wetlands will be disturbed as a part of the development. The wetland areas to be disturbed are located in small pockets on the southeastern portion of the site, outside of the minor floodplain. All required permits will be secured. Based on the County's mapping system, there are no steep slopes on the property.

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has conducted a search of its Biotics Data System for occurrences of natural heritage resources in the area. Natural heritage resources are defined as the habitat of rare, threatened, or endangered plant and animal species, unique or exemplary natural communities and significant geologic formations. Biotics documents the presence of natural heritage resources in the project area. However, due to the scope of the activity and the distance to the resources, DCR does not anticipate that the proposed project will adversely impact the natural heritage resources. Further, the proposed activity is not expected to affect any documented state-listed plants or insects. A copy of the July 3, 2012, letter from DCR was filed with CMPT 2012-0003. It is noted that the property has been farmed for several years. Hay production continues on the property.

The property is not adjacent to any scenic rivers and does not possess limestone conglomerate area. No adverse impact to groundwater is anticipated. The project will utilize public sewer and water. Development will be accomplished in accord with the County regulations and development standards. Overall, the physical characteristics of the site are well suited for the proposed school use.

Group Two/Heritage Resource Assets. A Phase I Archaeological Survey was conducted by Thunderbird Archeology in June of 2012. Five scattered prehistoric artifacts were found. The June 2012 report states that none of the isolated finds met the definition of an archeological site

according to the DHR guidelines. No sites were recorded and no further work is recommended. A copy of the June 2012 Phase I Archeological Survey was filed with CMPT 2012-0003.

Group Three/Open Space Assets. The development of this property for public uses will include significant open space assets. The Plan recognizes public school sites as an element of the County's Green Infrastructure system. Facilities provided at the school site will afford active recreational opportunities for the community.

Group Four/Complementary Elements. Development will comply with the County's standards for air quality, light and noise. No adverse impacts are anticipated. Site lighting will be cutoff and fully shielded, directed inward and downward toward the interior of the property. Middle and elementary school fields are typically not lighted. Noise will be that typically associated with children playing outside and the dropping off and picking up of students.

#### Transportation

The proposed school site possesses frontage on a minor collector road, Route 620, Braddock Road. In the Countywide Transportation Plan (CTP), Braddock Road is planned as a 4 lane divided, major collector road with turn lanes at intersections for the section between the Fairfax County Line west to Route 659 Relocated/Gum Springs Road (Northstar Boulevard). From Northstar Boulevard to Route 15, Braddock Road is planned as a two lane Minor Collector Road within 70 foot of right-of-way. Currently, Braddock Road in the vicinity of the site is a pave in place roadway consisting of two nine foot wide lanes with two foot in width shoulders. A detailed traffic analysis will be prepared and provided with the Site Plan. Appropriate improvements will be evaluated at that time. Access to the school site is proposed onto Braddock Road via two separate entrance/exits, one for buses and one for other vehicles. Right -of-way/public easements for future road improvements will be provided as a part of site development. It is anticipated that turn lanes will be provided into the primary site entrance. A local street is proposed to be constructed from Willowsford The Greens to the school site. This street connection which was recommended by the Planning Commission during the initial review in 2012 will allow the adjacent residential neighborhood to access the school without having to utilize Braddock Road. Overall, a safe and efficient access will be available consistent with Plan policies.

#### Sustainable Design

The Loudoun County School Board, as a goal for design, construction, renovation and operation of all Loudoun County public facilities will strive to meet or exceed the criteria of nationally recognized programs for measuring energy efficiency such as ENERGY STAR, LEED, Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) and Green Globe.

## **Summary**

The proposed public school site is consistent with the policies of the County's Adopted Comprehensive Plan. Specifically:

- The School Board has determined the need for an additional middle school in the Dulles South area to serve the growing population.
- The proposed site is located at the focus of the existing and potential future attendance area, within the Transition Area. The Transition Area is planned for growth. The Transition Area policies recognize the need to provide public uses in the area that will serve not only the Transition Area but also the rural and suburban student populations.
- Safe and convenient access will be provided to the site. The site has convenient access to a minor collector road and a local neighborhood street will be provided for access to the adjacent community. A traffic study will be provided in conjunction with the Site Plan application and appropriate improvements will be evaluated at that time.
- LCPS and Parks, Recreation and Community Services have a long standing coordination policy for shared use of fields.
- The proposed development will take into account planning goals related to elements of Green Infrastructure including protection of environmentally sensitive areas, incorporation of tree save areas and indigenous vegetation into proposed buffers, use of low impact design techniques and best management practices, and the use of sustainable design measures. Wetlands delineation, Phase I Environmental and Phase I Archeological studies have been completed. The majority of the site is in open fields.
- The proposed site will be served by public sewer and water and will have all utilities needed to support the proposed use.
- The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding land uses. Buffers will be provided along the property boundaries. Existing trees will be utilized as a part of the buffers to the extent practical. School building design will incorporate features to provide an aesthetic appearance including double hung windows similar to residential construction, accent materials to provide interest in color and texture, and horizontal bands to minimize height appearance. The building height will be less than 40 feet consistent with Transition Area policies. Proposed building, parking and security lighting will be cutoff and shielded, directed downward and toward the interior of the property.
- The proposed use will comply with the zoning standards of the TR-1 and TR-3 Districts.
- A Commission Permit (CMPT 2012-0003) was previously approved for the majority of the site acreage on 10/16/12.
- Overall, the proposed location, character, and extent of the proposed uses are in substantial accord with the County's Adopted Comprehensive Plan.

In summary, the proposed public school site is consistent with the Plan policies and will meet a critical service need. Your favorable consideration is respectfully requested.